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DODGERS FYI

Dodgers' Hiroki Kuroda to miss first round of playoffs

Dodgers right-hander, who has been on the disabled list twice this season, has a bulging disk in his neck that will sideline him for at least the division series.

By Dylan Hernandez

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Hiroki Kuroda maintained his sense of humor when talking about what could be his greatest setback of an injury-riddled season: a slightly bulging disk in his neck that will sideline him for at least the opening round of **Workplace voluntary benefits boost** the playoffs.



company image, bottom line and employee morale

Asked whether he considered this to be unluckiest season of his professional career, Kuroda replied, "So far. But my career's not over yet."



Kuroda spent most of the first two months this season on the disabled list because of a strained side muscle. He returned to the DL in August after a line drive struck him on the head.

Millions in tuition aid to return to college



With Kuroda unavailable, Manager Joe Torre will face simpler decisions when assembling his postseason roster -- but simpler, in this case, probably isn't better.

Randy Wolf and Clayton Kershaw figure to start the first two games of the National League division series, with Chad Billingsley, Vicente Padilla and Jon Garland candidates to start the next two.

Padilla will start the regular-season finale Sunday. Garland, who gave up five runs in 3 1/3 innings in a loss to San Diego on Wednesday, is scheduled to pitch in relief that day.

Kuroda said he didn't know when he would be able to pitch again.

Trainer **Stan Conte** said that won't happen until Kuroda has "full, pain-free range of motion." Conte added that an injury like this can take anywhere from a week to six weeks to heal.

When Kuroda asked Dr. **Robert Watkins Jr**. whether he could pitch through the pain, he was told that doing so could worsen the injury to the point of requiring surgery.

Conte said he believed that this injury was unrelated to the line drive that hit Kuroda in August, but Kuroda wasn't so sure.

"After that, my neck and back were always sore," Kuroda said. "But this was a pain I hadn't felt before."

Kuroda said he first felt it Tuesday when running in San Diego.

"If there's a way I could pitch, I would like to," Kuroda said. "But I don't want to do anything halfway. There's too much at stake in a short series."

O-Dog close to maxing out incentives

Entering Friday night's game, **Orlando Hudson** was 10 plate appearances short of reaching all of his incentive benchmarks, which would earn him a total of \$8 million.

Recovering from a wrist operation that cut short his 2008 season, Hudson was signed to a bargain deal that included a base salary of only \$3.38 million. But the contract included up to \$4.62 million in incentives based on plate appearances, including \$10,000 for each plate appearance from his 576th to 632nd.

Hudson went into the game with 622 plate appearances.

Short hops

Juan Pierre was voted by teammates and coaches as winner of the Roy Campanella Award, given to the Dodger who "best exemplifies the spirit and leadership of the late Hall of Fame catcher." . . . **Casey Blake**, who missed the previous eight games because of a strained left hamstring, was back in the lineup. . . . **Ronnie Belliard** was out of the lineup again but has been running for the last two days. Torre said he wasn't sure whether Belliard would play this weekend. . . . **Tom Lasorda** was honored in a pregame ceremony to commemorate his 60 years with the Dodgers.

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